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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLGB #1142 3321601
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 281601Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3515
INFO RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA 1588
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM 0786
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1490
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0149
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0686
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0178
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0058

UNCLAS KIGALI 001142

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C AND DS/IP/AF

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: ASEC KAWC PREL FR RW
SUBJECT: THE FRENCH LEAVE RWANDA

REF: A. KIGALI 1125

1B. KIGALI 1130
1C. PARIS 7549

11. (U) Twenty-five French Embassy and other official personnel left Kigali on 27 November at 19:00 local time via a Rwandair Express flight to Entebbe. The atmosphere was somber in the airport VIP lounge, the French said final good-byes, took photos and shared chocolate. There was no press and only a few mid-level Rwandan airport officials observed the last French diplomat boarding the DHC-8.

12. (U) Shortly after the French convoy left the French Embassy (16:30 local) for Kigali International Airport, a well organized group of approximately 250 young men arrived on the scene to demonstrate. The Rwandans mobilized at the now closed French cultural center and marched less than a mile to the French Embassy. (Note. The French Embassy, in the upscale Kiovou neighborhood, shares a wall with the U.S. Marine residence. End note.) The demonstration, observed and recorded by RSO and a few Marines, started at 17:00 and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Although some protesters made half hearted attempts to break through the cordon established by 25 Rwandan National Police (RNP) officers and climb the Embassy wall, there appeared to be little risk that the situation would escalate into a true riot. After 20 minutes of yelling and jumping about, a RNP riot control detachment of 20 officers swept through to disburse the crowd. While the demonstrators were temporarily energized by the banging of batons on shields, they steadily withdrew—some laughing and smiling. There were no reports of arrests or injuries, in fact, from video reviewed by Emboffs it did not appear that anyone was even hit by a baton rather; they were just brusquely nudged away.

13. (SBU) Comment. The Rwandan decision was a shock to the French Embassy and most French officials, including the Ambassador, were deeply disappointed and blunt in their belief that the GOF would not return to Rwanda in the near future. The demonstration, tailor-made for the press, was the only "popular" response on the 27th and country team does not consider it to be indicative of widespread anger by the Rwandan public that would lead to an increased risk to remaining French nationals or other foreigners. End comment.
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